



*European Potentates Observe Naval Might.* This cartoon, in which figures representing the countries of Europe observe the naval power of the United States, appeared in the New York Herald. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

SEE ALSO *United States Interventions in Postindependence Latin America.*

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## MUHAMMAD 'ALI

### 1769–1849

Muhammad 'Ali was an energetic and ambitious Ottoman governor of Egypt from 1805 to 1848. During his long career he managed to augment Egypt's wealth, introduce long-lasting changes to its society, and

embark on an expansionist policy that gravely threatened the Ottoman Empire. Due to European opposition, however, the mini-empire he had founded had to be dismantled; in exchange, the Ottoman sultan granted him hereditary rule of Egypt and the Sudan.

Said to be of Albanian origins, Muhammad 'Ali had been a tobacco merchant when in 1801 he joined an irregular military force dispatched to Egypt by the Ottomans to evict the French army, which had occupied the country three years earlier. Following the French evacuation, Muhammad 'Ali seized effective control of Cairo and forced the sultan in Istanbul to appoint him officially as governor of Egypt with the title of Pasha (1805).

Muhammad 'Ali moved fast to centralize control by inviting many friends and relatives to settle in Egypt and by appointing them in key positions within the provinces. He then initiated a radical overhaul of the agricultural sector. Aware of Ottoman attempts to dislodge him from Egypt, he attempted to raise troops from the Sudan in 1818. When these attempts proved unsuccessful, he started conscripting peasants from the Egyptian countryside (1820–1821) and soon appointed European



**Muhammad 'Ali.** Considered the founder of modern Egypt, Muhammad 'Ali is often depicted as a strong man who stood up against Western imperialism. © BETTMANN/CORBIS. REPRODUCED BY PERMISSION.

officers to train them. He also founded many schools, factories, and hospitals to serve this army. Using these well-trained troops he grudgingly lent a helping hand to the sultan in his fight against the rebellious Greek insurgents. After initial successes, a combined British, French, and Russian navy sank the entire Egyptian and Ottoman fleet in October 1827.

Following the Greek debacle, the Pasha resolved not to get embroiled in the sultan's struggles. In 1831 he even invaded Syria to establish a buffer area between his power base in Egypt and the sultan's in Anatolia. His troops faced ineffective resistance and soon crossed into Anatolia and gravely threatened Istanbul. Alarmed at his vassal's surprise advance, the Ottoman sultan sought help from Britain, and when this did not materialize he turned to the Russians who were only too eager to interfere in Ottoman affairs. In time, the British saw the Pasha's bid for independence and expansionist policies as undermining the peace in Europe and seriously threatening their interests in Asia. In 1840 they convened a European conference in London that forced the Pasha to withdraw from Syria, southern Anatolia, Crete, and Arabia. Finally, in 1841 the Ottoman sultan issued a rescript ordering

him to reduce the size of his army, but also bestowed on him the hereditary rule of Egypt and the Sudan.

For the remaining years of his reign Muhammad Ali devoted all his energy to domestic policy. After his death in 1849 the governorship of Egypt was passed on according to the 1841 rescript to the oldest male member of Muhammad 'Ali's family, but in 1867 Ismail, his grandson and third successor, managed to change the conditions of hereditary rule to maintain the governorship in his own line. When the British occupied Egypt in 1882 they kept members of Muhammad 'Ali's family as titular governors of Egypt under the titles first of khedive (1882–1914), then sultan (1914–1923), then king (1923–1952). In 1952 a military coup lead by Gamal Abd al-Nasir forced King Farouk, the last of Muhammad 'Ali's descendants, to abdicate the throne, and in 1953 the monarchy was abolished and Egypt was declared a republic.

Dubbed as the "Founder of Modern Egypt," Muhammad 'Ali is often depicted as a strong man who stood up against Western imperialism. Having imperial designs himself, however, it is probably more correct to see his legacy as changing Egypt's relationship with the Ottoman Empire, instituting long-lasting socioeconomic changes in Egypt, and establishing a dynasty that ruled over Egypt and the Sudan for 100 years.

SEE ALSO *Egypt; Empire, Ottoman; Empire, Russian and the Middle East.*

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*Khaled Fahmy*

## MULTATULI (EDUARD DOUWES DEKKER)

1820–1887

In his novel *Max Havelaar of de koffieveilingen der Nederlandsche Handel-Maatschappij* (Max Havelaar or